

Crooked Generations

‘Someone asked Joseph of Arimathea, “That was a great tomb. Why did you give it to Someone else to be buried in?” “Oh”, said Joseph, “He only needed it for the weekend”.’

Isn’t that a great truth? But Joseph didn’t know it then. He really should have. Most people should have, but didn’t. For they were all living in a “crooked generation”. If anyone surely should have known, wouldn’t it have been the Lord’s disciples? Yet, on the road to Emmaus, two disciples, not of the central twelve, but disciples none the less who had apparently seen the Lord Jesus miraculously feeding crowds with only a couple loaves of bread, or perhaps had seen Him celebrate the Passover Seder meal, when He broke the matzah, or possibly even among others at the Last Supper. For it was when He broke the bread at the house in Emmaus that they suddenly recognized Him. It may have been the way He handled the bread, broke it and gave it to them. They suddenly saw that it was *the* way the Lord had always done it. It was the Lord’s hands and movements. And in that flash of recognition, He vanished. But they weren’t distressed. They weren’t disappointed. “Ah, shucks! He’s up and left us again!”, Cleopas could have said. But no, he didn’t. Why not? Would you have?

No, the wonderment that their Lord was actually alive, and

had been sitting right there, eating a meal with them, talking with them, having walked miles with them, and teaching them all that way, well, how marvelous was that? And if that wasn't enough, they had actually physical felt His presence. Their physical bodies had been affected by His presence. They said, as recorded in Luke 24:32: "Didn't our hearts burn within us as He talked with us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?" Lord Jesus, in His newly resurrected body, was radiating some kind of spiritual power, a life-giving power, an energy, that could be physically felt. Why point this out? Because, many, many people feel this same energy when in the manifest presence of Holy Spirit. I've spoken a time or two before of my own encounters with the Lord's very presence, in more recent years, but first and most powerfully, when I was a young child. I had just lain down on my big double bed, at bedtime. I hadn't gone to sleep yet, when I suddenly felt Lord Jesus lay down on my bed beside me. My eyes were closed, and it didn't occur to me to open them. Nor did I feel any need whatsoever to look at Him. Every fiber of my being knew it was Him. I was literally enveloped, surrounded, and literally hugged by wave after wave of His love, peace and joy. I naturally didn't want it to end. But as I rested in His love, practically floating in heavenly bliss, as my young mind could comprehend it, His presence gradually and gently withdrew. And I fell asleep with probably the most peaceful night I've ever had in my life. So far!

I've felt His presence at other times in my life, and in different

ways. Probably most of us have. And, like Cleopas and friend, we may well not have realized it until it was over! But He is God, and He is the most real and solid “thing” of all. He is more real than anything in the cosmos, the multiverse, even more real than we are ourselves. Far more. And yet, because we live in a crooked generation, under the seemingly inescapable sway of demonic evil, far too often we don’t notice, don’t see, don’t feel, just totally miss seeing Him and His work, even when it’s right in front of our eyes.

So it was at first with the disciples. The women came back claiming that the tomb was empty. Lord Jesus’ body was gone! Missing! Mary, as reported by John, was so distressed that she asked the “gardener” if He had taken the Lord’s body away, after having somehow broken the official “police line—imperial seals”, and rolled the impossibly heavy stone away from the entrance. Turns out, it wasn’t the gardener at all. It was the Lord Himself, Who spoke directly to Mary, calling her by name. Well, it appears that none of the men believed her story that the Lord was alive. But then He appeared to the other women, then to Peter, or to these two here, Cleopas and friend. It’s not clear if the Lord first to them, or to Peter, but appear risen and alive to them He did. And He wasn’t through. Not by a long shot. For the next forty days, He appeared again and again. Sometimes to the Twelve, sometimes to others, at least one time to a large crowd of at least 500 people. He didn’t just appear. He interacted with us. Most

importantly, He continued to teach us. But this time, His teaching was from this side of the resurrection. No longer was it future. Now it was past. It was no longer prophesied. It was now accomplished fact. A new age had begun. And now His teaching revealed how we should have foreseen from the Scriptures how it was all going to happen before it happened. Truly, it's all much easier to see in retrospect. And today is no different.

When Cleopas and friend related the seemingly inexplicable puzzle of the Nazarene's missing body, Christ now just had to interrupt them. "You foolish people!" He said, in verse 25. Yes, we all do have a strong tendency to just not see what's right in front of our faces. And especially so if it's written down for us in black and white in the Bible. For the Bible requires us to not just hear it, not just read through it, but to savor it, to meditate upon it, to mull passages over and over. All the while asking The Teacher, Holy Spirit is His name, to explain it to us. And He certainly will, matching our ability and maturity to understand. But we do have to make the effort. If we never crack open the Book, how is He going to teach us? How is He going to give us greater and increasing understanding? The key is to seek God and His instruction. Because He's the One Who wrote the Book! He's the One it's all about. So it follows, that He's the One Who knows it best.

When Peter preached the very first Christian sermon, he wasn't the One doing the talking. No, no. He and 119 others had just been baptized by Holy Spirit in the Upper Room. The mani-

fest presence of the Risen Lord and God had descended upon them, in multi-sensory fashion. Not only could they feel in their bodies the Lord's presence and power, but their eyes could see flames of fire alighting on each of them, and their ears could hear a supernatural sound, likening it to a roaring, rushing wind, which itself had a weightiness to it. It moved, but not like any ordinary breeze. It was powerful, but it didn't blow physical objects out of place, or leave scattered debris in its wake. This was the supernatural presence of God breaking into our physical world, into the believers assembled there, as well as witnessed by "innocent" bystanders around and outside that house, who could feel and see and hear with their own eyes and ears that something miraculous was going on. And as "inquiring minds want to know", they wanted to know what was going on. And so Peter, prompted and led by Holy Spirit as he never had before, preached, and the listeners were convicted in their hearts, as only Holy Spirit can convict us and bring us to repentance. "What should we do?" they implored Peter to answer them. Luke 24:38-39 records Peter's inspired answer, the same answer that is true for all people for all time and space, now and forever: "Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This promise is to you, to your children, and to those far away—all who have been called by the Lord our God".

Then verse 40 continues: "... Peter continued preaching for

a long time, strongly urging all his listeners, ‘Save yourselves from this crooked generation!’” With that last recorded admonition, we can tell what Peter was being led to preach about. He was describing a life change, a transformation of how these 3,000 some new believers would be living their lives from here on out. Now that they have heard the Gospel, which is what Peter summarized in verse 38, they had to actually repent. Repent means to turn around. Do an about face. Where once we lived according to the world’s ways, we now reject the world and its lying, crooked ways, and seek, strive, and struggle to live “straight” lives, in full obedience to the laws of God. He is holy. We must be holy. He is righteous. We must be righteous. He is faithful. We must be faithful. He is loving. We must be loving. It’s as simple as that.

Since we’re still human after encountering Him and repenting of our sins, sins which are everything and anything that is worldly, that is fleshly, that is impure, that is crooked, it stands to reason that we, born in these oh, so crooked generations, can’t become Godly by ourselves. God knows this, which is why Lord Jesus breathed on us Holy Spirit, Who does this work within us, if we but let Him. So let Him. Is not our generation one of the most crooked, perhaps most crooked of all time? Since we’re in the end times, it most certainly is. So we plead with God to save us from this crooked generation. And He will, for He is faithful, and as He saves us, He will also save others, that His banquet hall may be filled with guests who never leave!! Your feast awaits!

